

Lassa fever in pregnancy resulting in maternal mortality: a report of two cases

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Introduction

Lassa fever is a zoonotic viral haemorrhagic fever that is often fatal, with pregnant women carrying a threefold risk of maternal and perinatal mortality. In pregnancy, the disease often presents with symptoms which overlap with other febrile illnesses and pregnancy-specific conditions.

Methods

We are reporting two cases of Lassa fever in unbooked pregnant women who presented to our facility with severe febrile illness, haemorrhagic signs, seizures and rapid clinical deterioration. These clinical features at presentation and bedside tests raised suspicion of viral haemorrhagic fever. However, the diagnosis was confirmed with Lassa PCR. Both women died within 12 hours despite prompt resuscitative measures.

Results

These cases highlight the diagnostic challenge of Lassa fever among pregnant women due to its nonspecific presentation. The delay in recognizing its symptoms in pregnancy and the disease's rapid progression resulted in poor outcomes. A high index of suspicion is necessary.

Conclusion

Prevention of Lassa fever infection remains key, both in the community and the hospital. As there is currently no approved vaccine for Lassa fever, effective prevention through rodent control and strict infection control protocols are paramount.